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Capital Reading

A Tale of Intrigue By Cautious Dulles

By Trumbull Higgins

ON MAY 2, 1945, a few days before the final collapse of Hitler's Third Reich, the unconditional surrender of all German forces in Italy and Southern Austria was announced by Prime Minister Churchill in the House of Commons. The story of how and why this long deferred capitulation came about has now been told by one of its principal protagonists, Allen Dulles, then chief of the Office of Strategic Services in Switzerland and subsequently the director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Although lacking in fundamentally new revelations the professional slant and remarkable characterizations of this fascinating reconstruction of the final stages of the Italian campaign make this both first-rate history and a potentially popular story of treason, espionage and intrigue in high places.

NOT SURPRISINGLY however, since the Bay of Pigs, Dulles is inclined to understate somewhat the role of the intelligence community in determining policy by means of the emphases in its intelligence reports — an understatement all the more regrettable since by Dulles's own evidence, the policy making role of the OSS in bringing about the German surrender in Italy was vital, to put it mildly.

Indeed, from 1940, Dulles's chief in the OSS, Wild Bill Donovan, and his principal assistant on the Ger-

"The Secret Surrender" by Allen Dulles (Harper & Row, 268 pp., \$5.95) is reviewed by Trumbull Higgins, author of four books on contemporary military history.

man surrender, Gero von Gaevernitz, were men dedicated to policies rather than to just estimates of their own: Donovan to an Allied campaign in the Mediterranean and Gaevernitz to drawing the German military resistance into open rebellion against Hitler, regardless of any contrary national security policies undertaken by the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Dulles himself makes a good, if only somewhat implicit, case for Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander's determination to thwart any Communist or Titoist seizure of northern Italy, including Trieste, whether Washington fully approved of the British intention in this respect or not. Certainly the abrupt reversals in Dulles's orders from the Combined Chiefs of Staff as a result of Alexander's resistance to Stalin's pressure had very different final results in Italy from those in Gen. Eisenhower's SHAEF theater.

The consequences, of course, were that in Sir Harold's command, the aggressive Anglo-American armies beat Marshal Tito's Partisans to Trieste by the narrowest margin while in Gen. Eisenhower's more important Central European theater, the Russians entered Berlin AND Prague without



Allen Dulles.

competition from the passive forces of the West. Of course, Dulles is too careful to take open credit for this long-sought goal of OSS policy in Switzerland.

DULLES LIKEWISE maintains a notable discretion regarding the essential Swiss role in furthering his plots and counterplots; it would be interesting to know just how much in their turn the Swiss had hedged with the Axis during the latter's heyday in 1940-1. But the former director of the CIA does stick his neck out courageously in defending the motives of his principal Nazi collaborator in the surrender of the German armies in Italy, SS Gen. Karl Wolff.

That from 1943, an SS general still imprisoned for war crimes today had hoped to make peace with the West, regardless of the frightful danger to his family and himself, is not a popular observation at the moment. Nevertheless, Wolff's painful example leads directly to Dulles's basic final conclusion, a conclusion with perhaps more repercussions than originally intended.

Writes the former CIA director from the vast weight of his 50 years of experience in war and diplomacy: "It is so easy to start wars or to get drawn into them, and yet so difficult to stop them. Once the contending forces are locked in battle, communication between them ceases . . . 'Trading,' in the broadest sense, is banned. . . . Usually, no safe and secure way of telling the other side that they want to make peace is quickly available."

With such permanently valid admissions from the top, what more can be added by critics at the bottom?

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